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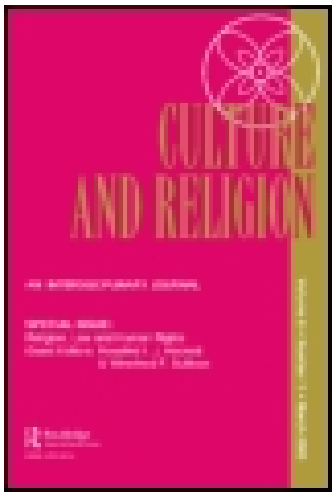

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THE SPIRITUAL AND THE REVOLUTIONARY: ALTERNATIVE SPIRITUALITY, BRITISH FREE FESTIVALS, AND THE EMERGENCE OF RAVE CULTURE

Christopher Partridge

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This article examines the sacralisation of festival and rave culture. Beginning with an exploration of the British free festival as a site of countercultural ideology and alternative spirituality, it traces the spiritual and ideological lines of continuity between the free festivals that took place with increasing frequency in Britain throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s and the rave culture of the 1980s and 1990s.

KEYWORDS rave culture; free festivals; New Age travellers; Stonehenge; Glastonbury; Goa; psychedelic

Introduction

The aim of this article is to provide an archaeology of rave spirituality, by tracing many of the central themes back into free festival culture.[1] While the ideas discussed have their roots in the countercultures and alternative spiritualities of the 1950s and 1960s, I maintain a distinction between the fashionable hippie culture of the 1960s and the much more countercultural, spiritually eclectic free festivals that emerged in the early 1970s.

Alternative Spirituality and Free Festivals in Britain

Idealistic, romanticised notions of love, community, spirituality, and relationship to the land were articulated by many young people—'tomorrow's people'[2]—who wanted retreat from a society they perceived to be inhibited, violent, and repressive. The free festival represented a microcosm of a new, utopian community on the edges of an old, decadent, and staid society. In 1972 the first Windsor Free Festival was held and in 1974 the first Stonehenge Free Festival, the

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latter becoming the longest-lasting annual *free* countercultural event (Worthington 2004). Festival goers were not members of the National Trust interested in pottering around ancient monuments, they were Pagan pilgrims interested in both music and sacred space. It was the *contemporary* spiritual significance of Stonehenge that attracted festival goers, its links with pre-Christian, indigenous religion investing it with power (see Stone 1999, 74). For many, at this ancient circle there is a meeting of the past and the present. At Stonehenge there was a blend of music, countercultural politics, and contemporary Pagan spirituality. Indeed, while music has always been central to free festivals, they were often much more than simply music events, music being, as Michael Clarke notes, 'only one of a variety of activities which, apart from participation in running the site, and preparing and distributing food, may include arts and crafts of various sorts, music and forms of theatre, folk dancing, fireworks and various manifestations of commitment to ecological awareness and to the occult' (1982, 85).

Held between 1974 and 1984, Stonehenge is generally acknowledged to be the most important of the free festivals. It was initiated by Phil Russell, described by his friend Jeremy Ratter as 'an English Shaman. . . an animist. . . involved in magical processes' (Stone 1996, 82). Following a vision of Christ in Cyprus (where he was born), Russell taught an idiosyncratic mysticism, which combined elements of sun worship, Christianity, and Paganism. According to Ratter (who later took the name Penny Rimbaud and co-founded the anarcho-punk collective Crass), Russell wanted to 'claim back Stonehenge (a place he regarded as sacred to the people and stolen by the government) and make it a site for free festivals, free music, free space, free mind' (Rimbaud 1981, 7). Known to his friends as Wally Hope, Russell and a group of his followers, the 'Wallies', held a small summer solstice festival at Stonehenge in 1974, following which they squatted the site in an attempt to resurrect sun worship at Stonehenge. They were arrested and lost their court case in August of the same year. The 1975 festival was resurrected to the east of the stones.

Free festivals were not, of course, the first music festivals. Not only can festivals, as cultural gatherings, be traced back many centuries, but twentieth-century popular music festivals, held as commercial ventures, began many years before the free festivals of the 1970s, with folk and jazz events in America (Clarke 1982, 19ff). More significant for the emergence of the festival as a countercultural 'happening' were several large-scale events in the 1960s, most notably Woodstock in the United States and the Isle of Wight in the United Kingdom (see Clarke 1982, 38ff). Emerging partly as a protest against the commercialism and capitalism of the large-scale festivals, a *free* festival was initially a festival at which no profit was made by the organisers. However, they quickly became much more than this. The festival became a utopian model of an alternative society. It sought to be what the anarchist thinker Hakim Bey (2003) has since termed a 'temporary autonomous zone', where members freely contribute to an economy based on mutual aid rather than money. 'The nature of a free festival is just that: freedom. You can do what you like, it doesn't matter how bizarre, as long as it doesn't impinge upon other people. No moralism. No

prohibitions. Only the limits of common humanity, aware of our responsibility to each other and to the earth we all share' (Stone 1996, 185). Also significant were the spiritual emphases of, particularly, the festivals held at Stonehenge and Glastonbury. Following Russell, the three people principally involved in organising Stonehenge were deeply involved in counter-cultural activity and alternative spirituality: Syd Rawle, self-styled 'King of the Hippies'; Bev Richardson, a Pagan leader, who had known and was influenced by the founder of contemporary Wicca, Gerald Gardner; and John Pendragon, the producer of the festival newsletter *Tribal Messenger*, who clearly understood free festivals to be spiritual happenings (see Worthington 2004, 74–78).

One of the contemporary by-products of the free-festivals in the late 1970s was the 'New Age traveller.' As the free festival scene evolved,[3] so groups of people organised their summers around festivals, travelling from one to the next.

> By the end of the 1970s a regular summer circuit had been established. From May Hill at the beginning of May via the Horseshoe Pass, Stonehenge, Ashton Court, Ingleston Common, Cantlin Stone, Deeply Vale, Meigan Fair, and various sites in East Anglia, to the Psilocybin Fair in mid-Wales in September, it was possible to find a free festival or a cheap community festival almost every weekend. (Aitken 1990, 18)

Travelling this circuit, setting up festivals and, often, selling psychedelics along the way, was a band of hippies that, at the beginning of the 1980s, became known as 'the Peace Convoy' because of its increasing involvement in anti-nuclear demonstrations. It was essentially this free festival convoy that evolved into the 'New Age travellers', a countercultural community that established 'a neo-medieval economy based around crafts, alternative medicine and entertainment: jugglers, acrobats, healers, food vendors, candle makers, clothes sellers, tattooists, piercers, jewellers, and drug peddlers' (Reynolds 1998, 136). Indeed, Simon Reynolds notes that despite the concerted efforts of the authorities to terminate the nomadic lifestyle of these 'medieval brigands'[4] by the end of the 1980s, some calculated that the number of travellers had reached 40,000. While this figure seems exaggerated, it is true that numbers had swollen considerably since the late 1970s (see Stone 1996, 153).

In the 1970s and 1980s many travellers promoted an idealism permeated with eclectic spiritual meaning. Hence, the label they came to bear is broadly accurate because, like the free festivals in which they had their genesis, they drew on many of the ideas and practices commonly associated with 'New Age' spirituality. Although Kevin Hetherington concedes that there was 'some resonance between the Travellers' outlook and that of the wider New Age movement' (2000, 12), there was, initially at least, much more than *some* resonance. Indeed, as he himself acknowledges, 'Many of the forms of religiosity and therapy associated with the New Age are of interest to many Travellers' (Hetherington 2002, 12). Moreover, his further point that 'many of these beliefs and practices are construed in modern societies as forms of rejected knowledge' (Hetherington 2002, 12) is also important, since free festival culture is concerned with the recovery of such 'rejected knowledge': a return

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to the land and to indigenous mysteries associated with the land—for example, ley lines, faery culture, spirits of place, the power of ancient sacred sites, and so on (see Stone 1999, 77ff).

Glastonbury and the Pyramid

First held in 1970, Glastonbury Fayre, as it was called in its early days, has become perhaps the most important and well-known current music festival in the world. In the words of Michael Eavis, the Methodist organiser and owner of the farm on which it takes place, the festival is 'a kind of utopia, really, something outside of the normal world we all live in' (Eavis, in McKay 2000, 29). However, it is important to understand that, certainly in the early years, this utopia was not a secular one. In accordance with Roger Caillois' classic interpretation, which sees a festival population possessing 'recourse to the sacred' (Caillois, in Duvignaud 1976, 15), the following comment about Glastonbury 1971 in *Melody Maker* is not untypical: 'The freaking was wholesome. You could stand back and laugh or kneel and pray in the shadow of Glastonbury Tor. . .' (NME 2003, 12). And, of course, as a festival site, Glastonbury, like Stonehenge, was initially chosen because of mythical and spiritual associations. As one of the organisers put it: 'It is the very heart of this body of England. . . What drew these people to Glastonbury was a feeling that from this ancient, sacred place a new spirit is to spread among men. They were here to bear witness to the birth of a new era, the Age of Aquarius' (quoted in Clarke 1982, 90).

In 1971 festival organisers built the structure that has become most closely identified with Glastonbury festivals, the pyramid stage. This was a particularly explicit manifestation of early-1970s alternative spirituality, in that it is fundamentally linked to the ideas discussed in John Michell's hippie occult classic, *The View Over Atlantis* (1969). Michell argues that there is a 'sacred relationship' between the dimensions of Stonehenge, Glastonbury, and the Great Pyramid in Egypt. 'And so it was, for that sole reason, that. . . the stage was built pyramid-shaped' (Sutherland 2003, 10). Based on a scaled-down version of the Great Pyramid of Giza, it was constructed in 1971 from polythene and scaffolding. Moreover, not only was it situated over a 'blind spring' on the St Michael ley line (located by dowsing) in order to tap hidden ancient powers, but the organisers, Bill Harkin and Andrew Kerr, 'rang Michell from Worthy Farm, and were advised by him to base the proportions of the pyramid on the dimensions of Stonehenge' (McKay 2000, 69). According to Michell, the Great Pyramid 'was constructed for a magical and sacred purpose, as a vehicle for transcending the material state, for travel in space, through time and into a further dimension' (quoted in McKay 2000, 70).

At a small unofficial festival in 1978, the pyramid was provided by Nik Turner and situated on the back of a flatbed truck. One of the founding members of Hawkwind—the principal free festival band of the period (see Stone 1996, 210–211)—Turner had built his own pyramid stage to promote his new band Sphinx. He had even recorded some of the flute music for Sphinx's album in the Great Pyramid at Giza. Indeed, because Turner regularly played at free gatherings and donated this collapsible stage,

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the pyramid and all that it symbolised was a regular feature at free festivals until the mid-1980s—particularly at Stonehenge.

Although the countercultural element at Glastonbury Festival has been eroded in recent years, it remains an alternative cultural and spiritual event for many attendees—something that has always been a protected feature of Glastonbury. Tim Beckerley's report of the 2002 festival includes the following description of activities in one of the areas of the site known as 'the Green Fields':

> A 12 feet high wickerwoman, a field full of tipis, a rest garden, healing workshops, innovative arts and crafts, alternative energy, yoga classes, the Greenpeace tent, veggie stalls, you get the picture. At the end of site there is a small, undulating field with a stone circle for those who wish to marvel at the midnight firework displays, watch the sun rise at four in the morning or to get away from the crowds and just chill. The Green Fields are composed of a self-confident community of kindred spirits. . . There is a tangible sense of peace and calm amid the myriad of sounds and music emanating from the festival. It would be easy to poke fun at this mix 'n' match of vibrant spontaneity and miscellaneous spirituality, but many of the Green Fielders wish to live a self-sustainable and natural existence away from the materialistic, money-driven trappings of western society—and they offer a tangible glimpse of alternative possibilities. (Beckerley 2003, 10)

The particular spiritual significance attributed to Glastonbury town and the surrounding area, which contributed so much to the early festivals, has continued into 'rave' culture. Several producers of rave are explicitly inspired by the area, particularly the Tor. Indeed, water from Glastonbury was used by the Star Children (trance musicians) at Return to the Source, a London trance club, in order to 'cleanse the venue's energy, creating sacred space before the club opens' (Star Children 1997, 44). Trance musicians Avatara comment that their 'secret retreat is located in Glastonbury, believed to be the heart chakra of the Earth and the strongest convergence of ley lines in Europe. One of these ley lines runs directly from Glastonbury Tor down through our studio' (Avatara n.d., 27). The spiritual symbols, mythologies, ideas, and sacred spaces that had inspired free festival culture reappeared in rave culture (see Boltwood 1997; Stone 1996, 219–222; Universal Sound 1997). In other words, there is a discernible continuity of spiritual ideas between the two cultures. To further understand this continuity, we need to follow other lines of thought, the first of which is psychedelic.

Psychedelic Trance Culture: The Goa Connection

There are several trails of evidence for the continuity between psychedelic hippie culture and certain aspects of 1980s and 1990s rave culture (see Davis 2004; Hutson 1999; Reynolds 1997; Rosenberger 1990; Saldanha 2004; Stone 1996; Whiteley 1997). One CD, for example, mixes dance music with the words of psychedelic guru Timothy Leary (1997); there are a range of groups and musicians who betray the influence of earlier psychedelic and festival

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countercultures; and, most significantly, there is a geographic connection between hippie festival culture and recent psychedelic rave culture, namely Goa on the South West Coast of India. A Portuguese colony until 1961, this Christian state in India to which many hippies travelled in the 1960s and 1970s became, in the 1980s, a utopian destination for the devotees of another form of western spiritually-informed popular culture. Psychedelic festival culture was transformed into Easternised psychedelic rave culture.

'Of all dance cultures, the Goan-inspired trance movement has most faithfully stuck to its anti-establishment roots... Education, globalism and spiritualism [*sic*] run deep in the trance scene' (Osborne 1999, 295–296). The roots of trance lie deep in the soil of festival culture, as well as in the extended, energetic music of bands such as Hawkwind, the dub reggae scene (which was evolving in the United Kingdoms from the mid-1970s onwards), and the avant-garde electronic music of groups and artists such as Brian Eno, Cabaret Voltaire, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schultze, Kraftwerk, and Can.[5] As a particular musical genre, however, it can perhaps be traced to a man simply known as Goa Gil—'an old psychedelic warrior from the Haight Ashbury' (Davis 2004, 259). Having worked as a DJ in Goa throughout the 1970s (playing rock and reggae), in the 1980s he decided to experiment with the post-punk electronica coming out of Europe. Sharing ideas with the international community of DJs working in Goa and influenced by Indian classical music, Gil developed a new Easternised form of electronica. Trance producer Ray Castle describes the Goa scene in the mid-1980s:

> The freaks and the hippies used to collect the most mind-boggling psychedelic dance music they could find and bring it to India and play it at these parties, and we used to exchange this music... In the old days we used to call it 'special music'. It was very obscure and it was very hard to get your hands on. You were a real connoisseur or collector, and Goa was a kind of fraternity of the obscure, weird psychedelic music collectors getting together, getting stoned, and getting off on the music; and sharing each other's music, exchanging it, copying it, and making parties out of it. (Castle, quoted in Cole and Hannan 2003)

Goa Gil was at the centre of this culture, developing his own brand of dance music. Inspired by the use of LSD particularly—which, as in free festival culture (some, such as Russell, used it as a sacrament), had become central to many of the Goan beach parties/raves—psychedelic trance emerged as the most popular and influential genre. As Ben Osborne notes, 'catering for cheap drugs, the ultimate Goan pilgrimage is to a Full Moon party. Here you can trip to the deep throb of electronic music until the first rays of the Asian dawn lift the dew from the palm leaves... [Goa] became a fixed stop-off point on the international party trail from Ibiza to Amsterdam, New York, and Mikanos, but differed from these scenes largely through its base in psychedelic drugs' (1999, 113–114).

That said, it was not just the pulse of the beat and the hallucinogens that made Goa trance 'special music'—there was also a sense of transcendence; a sense that the music was connecting dancers to that which was beyond the

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mundane; a sense that, like their free festival predecessors, they were gathering as an alternative community. Goa trance was mystical music, a rave was a *satsang*, the DJ was a guru (see Davis 2004, 262–263). One fan remembers Goa Gil looking like 'a Sadhu', who, when he plays, 'puts a Shiva in front of him and incense sticks'. This fan even goes so far as to state that he 'really was a religious leader' (Bussmann 1998, 134). As we will see, the Goa DJ adopts a guru-like, even shaman-like, role, in which they were often understood to guide dancers on a spiritual journey during the course of an all-night party.

At the heart of the early trance scene was Raja Ram (Ron Rothfield),[6] an Australian musician, who was a member of Quintessence, an Indian-inspired psychedelic band that played at the initial Glastonbury free festivals (1970 and 1971). As with Goa Gil, the praise Raja Ram receives goes beyond that which would normally be given to a DJ. He is not just a great DJ, says one fan, but 'Raja Ram is the most inspiring person I ever met' (Bussmann 1998, 134). I am not arguing that people actually worshipped DJs in Goa or that they responded to them as other Westerners in India were responding to gurus such as Satya Sai Baba. I am simply noting that, within the early Goa trance scene, the relationship between the raver and the DJ was significant, and often spiritually charged. Jane Bussmann hints at this in her popular overview of dance culture: 'Those who stuck with [trance] went totally hippie: instead of the middle ground of the odd Nehru shirt and a pair of sandals, they went deep into the trance with a bindi on their bonce. Goa seemed an appropriate destination for the mystical raver' (1998, 108).

Hence, in this early shift from free festival culture to Goan free party culture, while the music changed a little—as popular music does—the psychedelic, spiritually eclectic culture remained intact: 'there is a strong correspondence between... ritualistic dance ceremonies and the nomadic lifestyle of the East–West hippie traveller cult, which has been a major influence on contemporary techno music' (Insectoid 1997, 50). This is conspicuously evident on most, if not all, CDs released on early trance labels such as TIP, Flying Rhino, and Return to the Source—the covers and titles of many tracks consistently feature explicit references to spirituality and psychedelia. For example, on Return to the Source products (tee-shirts, CDs, posters, flyers, etc.), images of the Buddha are ubiquitous, as are those of Hindu deities, and track listings frequently include references to shamanic, Pagan and psychedelic themes. Similarly, the covers of the *Goa Trance* compilations all have pictures from Hindu mythology.

Interestingly, the followers of the Indian guru Rajneesh/Osho have strong links with some forms of contemporary dance culture, particularly the trance music scene. The energetic, convulsive dancing followed by periods of calm—'dynamic meditations'—for which they were well known were often accompanied by techno and ambient music. More significant still, since the 1960s, followers had lived on Ibiza and had advocated the use of ecstasy as an aid to the development of community and personal spirituality, including dynamic meditation. According to Bussmann, the followers 'were trance dancing and practising free-love culture before it made the most unexpected transition to the bleak British inner cities.

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Clubbers were impressed by what they saw' (1998, 3). D'Andrea is more explicit concerning the significance of the Osho movement for western rave culture. Following the closing of Osho's ashram in Oregon,

> many *sannyasins* returned to Ibiza... While participating in the nightclub life, they also introduced New Age techniques from the USA, including the use of MDMA for meditation and body therapies. Although 'ecstasy' was already known in European gay and anti-psychiatric circles, it was through the interaction between the *sannyasins* and late-1980s clubbers in Ibiza that MDMA became an explosive discovery for European youth... The phenomenon flowed from the underground to the mainstream, from Poona, to America, too Ibiza, to London, to the world. Within multiple flows of alternative subjects, objects, and imaginaries across East and West, Osho *sannyasins* were a bridge between the 1960s counterculture and the 1990s Techno movement. (D'Andrea 2004, 244)

Cultural Eclecticism and the Significance of Indigenous and Pagan Spiritualities

Much early psychedelic spirituality at Goa was, as might be expected, inspired by Indian religions. However, as with contemporary psychedelia generally (Partridge 2003; 2006, ch. 3), so psychedelic trance became increasingly more eclectic. Indeed, the Goa DJ Ray Castle had, in 1987, begun organising trance parties in Europe under the name of 'Pagan Productions'. Similarly, as trance culture travelled to Australia, initially becoming established at the Northern New South Wales hippie destination of Byron Bay, it became less Indian and more Pagan. I am not suggesting that the alternative spiritual mix was not evident at Goa—even Goa Gil understood trance as 'the revival and awareness of ancient tribal practices' (Cole and Hannan 2003)—only that as the location changed, the balance of spiritual ideas shifted. As trance travelled from the beaches of Goa to the West it became more Pagan/Shamanic and earth-centred, often focusing on the indigenous religious traditions of the area (e.g. Aboriginal in Australia, Celtic in the United Kingdom, Native American in the United States). Hence, as it came to the West, it increasingly reflected its neo-Romantic, free-thinking, utopian predecessor, the free festival. Castle certainly makes much of the notion that trance is a revival of Pagan and tribal cultures: 'Like the Aborigine, eons ago, that contemplated the planetsphere, whilst hitting their sticks, blowing through a pipe (didgeridoo). These open-air, wilderness, tribedelic, pagan-like parties (rituals) are along this line of primordial communion' (Castle, quoted in Cole and Hannan 2003). In a similar way to free festival organisers and musicians, such as Russell and Turner (Stone 1996, 80–99, 218–219), those who were involved in free parties insisted that 'the dance space in trance-dance parties is a sacred space. It is a form of meditative collective spiritual worship. It is a reconnection with the elemental, primordial rhythms of organic, cosmic life force' (Insectoid 1997, 50). This shift from the spiritual emphases of earlier hippie trance culture to those of contemporary rave culture is reflected in the music, in that Eastern sounds typical of Goan music (e.g.

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Islamic and Indian singing, the tambura, the sitar, and the tabla) were supplemented and even replaced by explicitly Pagan singing (for example, Cat Von Trapp's [1997] 'Reaper Girl'), samples of the singing of indigenous tribal peoples (for example, Ceba's 'Sky Spirit' [1997], Insectoid's 'Tribadelic Nomads' [1997], Zion Train's 'Shaking Tent' [2000], and the more commercial music of Deep Forest), or the sound of indigenous instruments, especially the didgeridoo (e.g. the music of Dr Didge, Insectoid's 'Tribadelic Nomads' [1997], and Tribal Drift's 'Transmutation' [no date] and 'Ants' [1995]). Indeed, when I saw Tribal Drift, they included, not only didgeridoos (of which there were several), but numerous visual, musical, and verbal references to indigenous cultures.

Hence, although there was still much that was spiritually Eastern in 'rave' music, increasingly more earth-centric, indigenous, Pagan and, indeed, eco-conscious content was expressed: for example, System 7's 'Manik Shamanik' (2001), Another Green World's 'On Lydia's Sixth Moon' (no date), Rhythm of Space's 'Yggsdrasil' (no date), and The Knights of the Occasional Table's albums *Knees Up Mother Earth* (1993) and *The Planet Sweet* (1995).

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Terence McKenna and Rave Shamanism

Just as Des Tramacchi discovered that in Australia 'Neo-pagan spiritualities have... exerted an influence on *doof* (Australian outdoor raves) ideologies, Chaos Magick and symbolism being particularly prominent' (Tramacchi 2000, 203), so in the United Kingdom Simon Reynolds has observed that, 'instigated by anarcho-mystic outfits like Spiral Tribe and by neo-hippie travellers on the "free festival" circuit... the techno-pagan spirit' evolved. Spiral Tribe, he points out, 'preached a creed they called Terra-Technic, arguing that the ravers' non-stop ritual dancing reconnected mankind with the primordial energy of the Earth' (Reynolds 1997, 159; see also 1998, 134–154). Again, the DJ becomes a shaman, 'a kind of channeller of frequencies and beats to massage and activate the unconscious and the superconscious via ecstatic, meditative, trance-dance—which becomes a form of euphoric, collective catharsis' (Castle, quoted in Cole and Hannan 2003). Indeed, there are several artists who make this DJ–shaman connection explicit, such as Tsuyoshi Suzuki (*Shamanic Trance: Dada Funk Mix* 1996), Mark Allen (*Shamanic Trance: Psiberfunk Mix*) and Shamanic Tribes on Acid (1997 and 1998).

What might be termed 'rave shamanism' or, more broadly 'technoshamanism' (see Hutson 1999, 60–63) has been promoted by Fraser Clark and, particularly, Terence McKenna. Indeed, McKenna is, arguably, the most important thinker to have had a formative impact on psychedelic rave culture.[7] The Shamen, for example, explicitly promote McKenna's philosophy, even including his narrative on their most popular album, *Boss Drum* (1991). Similarly, bands and producers such as Mixmaster Morris (e.g. Irresistible Force 1992), the Mushroom Band (1994), Space Time Continuum, and Zuvuya are conspicuous in their appreciation of him. Zuvuya have even recorded two albums with McKenna, *Dream Matrix Telemetry* (1993) and *Shamania* (1994).[8] McKenna's *The Archaic Revival* (1991) and *Food of the Gods* (1999)

have had a pervasive influence on those interested in dance and psychedelics. Tramacchi's research in Australia supports these observations: 'all my informants were familiar with the work of Terence McKenna, a highly charismatic spokesperson for the psychedelic community, who encourages the exploration of the traditional shamanic tryptamine hallucinogens. . . as an essential element in an "archaic revival"' (2000, 202–203).

Sometimes described as 'the intellectual voice of rave culture' (Lindemann 1999), McKenna had a degree from the University of California at Berkeley in Shamanism, Ecology and Resource Conservation. He developed many of his ideas travelling in Asia and South America, often with his brother Dennis, seeking to learn as much as he was able about shamanism and what he calls 'ethnopharmacology'. Although he died on 3 April 2000 from brain cancer, he continues to be, as he had been for over 25 years, the principal exponent of a mycologically oriented psychedelic philosophy of religion and culture, which argues that the evolution of human consciousness was induced by the ingestion of hallucinogenic mushrooms, the spores of which may have originally travelled through space—and may even have been created by extraterrestrial beings (McKenna 1986, 14; 2003). However, his principal argument is that humans have a fundamental and important relationship with mushrooms. Furthermore, not only are we self-reflective beings because our early ancestors ate hallucinogenic mushrooms, but we are thereby also 'spiritual' beings. There is a chemical origin to the sense of the sacred in human history. Powerful, induced visionary experiences caused humanity to look beyond the physical world and to interpret life religiously. Organic psychedelics, used spiritually by some indigenous cultures, are 'the real missing link' in human evolution.

The recovery of all that psychedelics offer, spiritually and intellectually, is what McKenna refers to as 'the Archaic revival' (McKenna 1991). The point to note is that McKenna believes contemporary psychedelic rave culture to be central to the Archaic revival. From the 1960s, through the countercultures of the 1970s and 1980s, we see the widespread return of western culture to its ancient psychedelic, shamanic foundations: 'Since the 1960s, the spread of popular cults of trance and dance, such as disco and reggae, is an inevitable and healthy counter to the generally moribund form religious expression has taken on in Western and hi-tech culture.' He continues: 'The connection between rock and roll and psychedelics is a shamanic connection; trance, dance, and intoxication make up the Archaic formula for both religious celebration and a guaranteed good time' (McKenna 1999, 63).

Needless to say, this articulation of a psychedelic continuity between premodern 'tribalism', indigenous spiritualities, festival counterculture, and rave connected well with the ubiquitous emphases of emergent dance culture. Pagan, countercultural, and eco-spiritual ideas within contemporary rave culture are clearly continuous with an older subculture. Indeed, following McKenna, Fraser Clark explicitly sought to inject rave culture with hippie idealism and Pagan spirituality. As Collin recalls, 'Clark. . . believed that the house scene was a contemporary version of the ancient dance-drug rituals of tribal shamans (perhaps his greatest success is that this idea has passed into popular currency and is endlessly repeated by those

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attempting to discern the "meaning" of house culture). . . Clark also had a romantic vision of a New Age Britain revitalised by pagan energies generated by a fission between the house generation and the green movement' (Collin 1998, 191). In Clark's words: 'As the depression in the dominator system deepens into final collapse, the co-operative free festy/rave/squatter/new new age/techno tribal traveller cross-over counter-culture will grow unstoppably into the new dominant goddess-worshipping techno-tipi dwelling eco-culture that will inherit a cleaned planet' (quoted in Collin 1998, 191). A psychedelic, shamanic, utopian, eco-eschatology!

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Rave Shamanism and Spiral Tribalism

Backtracking a little, I want to draw some lines of thought together and trace an explicit ideological and spiritual path from the free festival scene of the 1970s and 1980s to the free party scene of the 1990s.

By the end of the 1980s, free festival and traveller culture was struggling. Indeed, as Donovan Wylie's disturbing collection of photographs charting the progress of a group of travellers during the 1990s shows (Wylie 1998), and as ex-travellers I have spoken to bemoan, some elements within the community began to decline into heroin dependency, alcohol addiction, and violence. As one traveller reflects, 'At one time smack [heroin] wasn't tolerated on the road at all. . . Certainly on festival sites, if anybody was selling or even using it, they were just put off site, full stop' (Carey 2000, 19). However, eventually, as the countercultural magazine *SQUALL* recorded, 'Heroin. . . found the younger elements of a fractured community prone to the drug's clutch and its use spread amongst travellers like myxomatosis' (Carey 2000, 19). Although the spiritualities and ideals of some travellers and festival organisers seemed to remain intact, the communities declined and many became disillusioned as a result of those whose increasing addiction led to crime and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Added to this was the persistent police action against free festivals. Travellers in particular suffered. The nadir of relations with the authorities was the notorious 'Battle of the Beanfield' on 1 June 1985, during which the police brutally attacked and arrested (falsely arrested, Winchester Crown Court found in 1991) members of the Peace Convoy travelling to set up the Stonehenge Free Festival (Stone 1996, 152–161). Kim Sabido, a reporter at the scene, made the following comment: 'here on this field has been some of the most brutal police treatment of people that I've witnessed in my entire career as a journalist' (Stone 1996, 159). 'There must be a public enquiry into the police's behaviour' (*Festival Eye* 1995, 8). There never was. As one traveller commented: 'It turned all of us and I'm sure that applies to the whole travelling community. There was plenty of people who had got something very positive together who came out of the Beanfield with a world view of fuck everyone' (Carey 2000, 18). Consequently, 1984 proved to be the last free festival at Stonehenge.

Hence, by the end of the 1980s, the situation was very different from that in the 1970s. Nevertheless, the embers of the free festival spirit still glowed, and would soon ignite again. As we have seen, a new cultural phenomenon was

emerging in the United Kingdom, resulting from, as Jim Carey recalls, 'an injection of new blood and economy to the festival scene':

> Rave parties were similar to free festivals in that they were unlicensed events in locations kept secret until the last possible moment. . . Some of these parties differed from free festivals in that they were organised by groups such as Sunrise, who would charge an entry fee and consequently make large amounts of money in the process. Not all such rave parties were of this nature however, and the free festival scene began to merge with the rave party scene producing an accessible hybrid with a new dynamism. (Carey 2000, 20)

This merging of free festival and rave cultures, however, led, not simply to the continuation of 'the scene', but also to the continuation of a particular blend of ideologies and spiritualities. The Pagan, punk, anarchic, hippie values of the former, began to shape the latter. As Alex Rosenberger commented in the 1990 issue of *Festival Eye*, 'over the past year links between "house culture" and "festival culture" have been getting more and more obvious. . . Ravers seem to have squeezed 20 years of "hippydom" into just two. . . It was either an incredible coincidence', he continues, 'or a deliberate message, but when Karma Productions organised their Energy Part 2 rave for July last year, the front of their flyer had a picture of Stonehenge surrounded by pentagrams' (*Festival Eye* 1990, 13). This was no coincidence. Rave collectives and producers such as Karma Productions were directly influenced by free festival culture. Similarly, comments made by the British DJ Danny Rampling about the late-1980s rave scene closely parallel those made by early free festival organisers and attendees, such as Phil Russell: 'In a naïve way we considered that a new age was starting, the Age of Aquarius, and we were the core of it. We were spreading the message of unity. It was a unique, magical time' (quoted in Bussmann 1998, 20). He even goes on to compare what they were doing with what Ken Kesey and his hippy collective, the Merry Pranksters, had done (on Kesey, see Stevens 1987, 305ff; see also Lee and Shlain 1985, 119–126). The free festival scene had evolved into the free party scene. Again, as Rosenberger reported at the time, an 'interesting development last year [1989] was the number of House sound systems that were appearing at festivals like Glastonbury and Treworgey' (1990, 13). Similarly, The Mutoid Waste Company—a group of travellers who sculpted post-apocalyptic art from society's waste—organised a festival/rave in a long railway warehouse in Paris, which combined festival bands playing at one end and rave sound systems at the other (*Festival Eye* 1990; Rosenberger 1990).

The controversial drug at the centre of rave culture in the late 1980s and 1990s was, of course, 'E' or 'Ecstasy' (methylene-dioxymethamphetamine [MDMA]). Although not a psychedelic in the sense that LSD, mescaline, *psilocybin*, and other powerful hallucinogens were, it could lead to experiences that 'involved intense insights into the depth of the human psyche that touched on a spiritual revelation or metanoia' (Wright 1998, 228). However, while mood altering, Ecstasy seems not have the same sort of 'spiritual' or 'transcendent' impact that LSD did in the 1960s and 1970s. Although its spiritual significance has been argued (e.g., Eisner 1993), generally

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speaking it tended to lead simply to egoistic hedonism, rather than to spiritual questing. I am not arguing that psychedelics do not engender hedonistic or egoistic attitudes (for they clearly do), but only that they also, partly because of their particular hallucinogenic properties, tend to contribute to a more spiritually reflective disposition. This can be observed in the underlying philosophy of the Spiral Tribe, which seems to have become more spiritual and ideological as a direct result of moving from primarily using Ecstasy to the use of LSD and *psilocybin*. That is to say, the shift in drug use led to a perspectival shift, from the simply hedonistic pursuit of happiness to the development of 'an alternative lifestyle, based around psychedelic drugs, tribal techno music, and New Age belief systems' (Osborne 1999, 273; see also Reynolds 1998, 134–154). In the words of Spiral Tribe's Mark Harrison, 'MDMA has its place, but once you've taken it a couple of times, its lessons are learned very quickly and it becomes unnecessary. . . From what I've seen I don't think it has very much to show you, whereas I don't think you can go wrong with LSD and magic mushrooms. They are much more important. . . LSD and magic mushrooms have a much more creative influence, not just on raves, but on life, on one's understanding of oneself and the world around' (quoted in Collin 1998, 205).

Significantly, this shift took place at the 1991 Longstock Free Festival, which was held because the police had again banned a solstice gathering at Stonehenge. Longstock proved to be both a 'revelatory, life-changing LSD experience' (Collin 1998, 205) and, more specifically, as Harrison recalls, 'the Tribe's spiritual awakening':

> Up until that point I thought ley lines, solstices and all that mumbo-jumbo was just hot air. I had no belief in it. Suddenly that all changed. Something just clicked, we were on a groove and we knew who we were. We got an inkling of the gravity of what we were up to and what we were about. It was bigger than all of us! It wasn't just Spiral Tribe as organisers or co-ordinators, it was also the people around us. We would all be on that kind of buzz, realizing that what we had here extended beyond each and every one of us and beyond the material thing of having a sound system. This is where the whole philosophy of the Spiral Tribe has its roots. But what was a great mystery and surprise—and still is—is that it was already within us. (Harrison, in Collin 1998, 200)

Another member of Spiral Tribe describes their genesis as follows:

> . . . we managed to get hold of a rig by persuading one of our friends to take out a loan. . . At this point we were all living in squats, so we started doing squat parties and that grew on and developed until we did a party out in Amsterdam. After that we wound up coming back and found ourselves going to a free festival in Britain, near Stonehenge, Longstock, last year, where suddenly a lot of us received a very spiritual sort of feeling. . . And one thing just lead to another until we started doing a lot of free festivals. . . (*Organ* 2004)

From this time on, comparisons were made with, again, Kesey and the Pranksters. Nel Stroud (1994), for example, speaks of 'the Spiral method' as follows: 'rewiring

of neural circuits through the use of LSD-25, a reconditioning of consciousness as old notions dissolve in the acid surge. They are the descendents of the Pranksters.'

Consequently, largely as a result of the links established with the remnants of the New Age traveller/free festival community, unlike many 'weekend clubbers', the Spiral Tribe and others in countercultural rave scene tended to be ideologically and spiritually driven. Indeed, shaped by free festival culture, such ravers were disillusioned with the hedonistic superficiality of E culture and its lack of countercultural and spiritual content. They were particularly unhappy with what was understood to be the commercialisation of rave culture. Similarly, there were those within the Goa rave scene—which, we have seen, had been moulded by earlier hippie and festival influences—who voiced similar concerns about the commercialisation of trance. Steve Psyko, for example, makes the following comment: 'The parties are made for money. . . the music is made for money. . . It reflects the Western mentality. What attracted me in the beginning of electronic music was that it didn't reflect the Western mentality. I am not really interested in any music that reflects that. . . where consumption is the basis of the mentality' (quoted in Cole and Hannan 2003).

The free festival-rave crossover was assisted by the traveller community. In particular, in this early period, the Spiral Tribe joined with the New Age travellers, imbibed much of their philosophy, and, like the 'Peace Convoy' before them, began travelling around the English countryside setting up their sound system. However, these events were far less organised than the free festivals were: 'We've never really known where we're going, we never really planned for the future of anything. . . We never predict where we're going to be, we just follow the vibe, we follow what feels right and go with it' (Spiral Tribe, in *Organ* 2004). Nevertheless, they quickly became, as Reynolds witnessed, 'prime movers on the scene, luring thousands of urban ravers to party at disused airfields and abandoned quarries' (Reynolds 1998, 136). These, as we have noted, became increasingly ideological and Pagan as they absorbed and communicated the free festival spirit. Believing the countryside to be a politically charged environment, they developed, Collin notes:

> a romantic, purist philosophy, based on their background, the situations they found themselves in and the people they came into contact with. . . They began to believe that techno was. . . the voice of the culturally dispossessed. . . [and] that the Spiral Tribe were in some way connected to prehistoric tribes of nomads who had celebrated music and dance thousands of years earlier in the same surroundings; that free parties were shamanic rites which, using new musical technologies in combination with certain chemicals. . . preferably in settings of spiritual significance, could reconnect urban youth with the earth to which they had lost contact, thus averting imminent ecological crisis. (1998, 203–204)

It is interesting to note that, in the wake of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (3 November 1994), which dealt a heavy blow to British outdoor gatherings, the culture began to go mainstream. That said, certain elements of the

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scene went underground, as was the case with the ART LAB in my home town of Preston (Hemment 1998, 219–227), and some sound systems, such as the Spiral Tribe, moved to Europe (Rietveld 1998, 250–251). For the most part, however, raves continued in licensed clubs, some of which held on to the countercultural and alternative spiritual ethos. The most important of these was perhaps Club Dog, which, as Reynolds notes, created 'a milieu in which the original free-party revellers mingled with part-time crusties, non-aligned trance fans and recent converts from rock to techno' (1998, 149). At roughly the same time, Easternised trance also went overground and 'exploded into media consciousness' (Reynolds 1998, 151). As it did, shamanism, Paganised romanticism, and dance as meditation surfaced in mainstream popular culture.

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Concluding Comments

Not only do free festivals and raves share many countercultural ideological and alternative spiritual resources, but, more directly, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the bohemian free festival gatherings of like-minded, free-thinkers, inspired by utopian ideals, Easternised psychedelia, and eco-activism, crossed over into rave culture. We have seen, for example, that Spiral Tribe, which was at the centre of many alternative raves in the United Kingdom and Europe in the early 1990s, had strong and formative connections with the New Age traveller community, free festival culture, and psychedelic spirituality. Indeed, many such raves (e.g. Castlemorton Common in 1992) were essentially free festivals in a rave style (see Stone 1996, 181–187). The 'temporary autonomous zone' continued.

While outdoor, psychedelic dance culture in the United Kingdom was greatly impeded by the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, the spiritual rave scene continued in venues such as Club Dog, Return to the Source, and Megatripolis. Organisers such as Clark (Megatripolis) and Chris Deckker (Return to the Source) have worked hard to develop spaces in which the alternative spiritualities and countercultural ideologies informing earlier rave and festival cultures could flourish. Indeed, Return to the Source, like some outdoor free festivals, has incorporated sacred dance, Shamanism, and Pagan rituals into some of their events. For example, their first 'party' in 2001 (14 April) celebrated 'the Spring equinox and the fertility Goddess Eostre, the Pagan Goddess of Spring. . .' (Return to the Source 2001, 1). Similarly, the Return to the Source label has released several CDs exploring alternative spiritual themes, notably *Deep Trance and Ritual Beats* (no date) and *The Chakra Journey* (online). For the compilation album *Sacred Sites* (1997), Deckker invited some leading international producers of psychedelic trance to choose a *sacred site* that inspired them. 'Their task was to visit the site, feel the energy and then create a track expressing through music the power of the site.' Hence, he says, 'This album represents a global journey. It is an attempt to reconnect with the ancient spirits of the earth, reminding us of the power we once felt as we danced the sacred path. The power we again feel today. We dedicate this album to our beautiful planet "Gaia" and all her devas' (Deckker 1997b, 5).

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While much contemporary 'club culture' cannot be described in this way, in that it has more in common with the 1970s disco culture in which house music has its origins (Garratt 1998, 3–31),[9] we have seen that many of the DJs, musicians, and organisers have been inspired by such ideals and spiritualities. For example, pillar of the hippie counterculture, popular performer on the free festival circuit, and former Gong member, Steve Hillage, has, with his partner Miquette Giraudy, made an enormously successful transition into dance culture as System 7. He has worked with numerous dance/techno/rave producers from Derrick May (see System 7 and Derrick May 2002) and Laurent Garnier (see System 7 2003) to drum 'n' bass DJ Doc Scott (see System 7 1996), and Tribal Drift's Cyrung. Similarly, psychedelic space rockers Ozric Tentacles, founded at the 1983 Stonehenge Free Festival, influenced and supported emerging rave culture and, in turn, have had their work remixed by dance music producers (for example Ozric Tentacles 1999). Moreover, two members of the band have even set up their own techno/rave outfit, Eat Static. All of these musicians continue to articulate countercultural and alternative spiritual themes.

It may now be too difficult in the United Kingdom, since the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, to hold free festivals and raves at sacred sites such as Stonehenge, but the alternative spiritual and countercultural emphases that inspired the free festivals and that became ubiquitous in rave counterculture have continued. Whether in a more muted form in some clubs or more explicitly at the increasing number of commercial music festivals in the United Kingdom, alternative spiritualities and countercultural ideologies are alive and, if not well, at least still breathing.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that, while this discussion focuses primarily on subversive, countercultural, and alternative spiritual streams within rave culture, there is much within later 'rave' culture that is, strictly speaking, neither 'countercultural' nor 'spiritual'. Rather, what emerged as 'club culture' became, to the chagrin of many insiders, commercialised and mainstream.
2. The term, which reflects the idealism of the period, is taken from the first account of the early festivals (Sandford and Reid 1974).
3. George McKay has provided a helpful 'Time-line of Festival Culture' (2000, 87–115). See also Clarke's 'Outline of Main Events', which lists festivals from 1956 to 1981 (Clarke 1982, v–ix). See also: http://festival-zone.0catch.com/.
4. The term was used by the then British Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd.
5. There are numerous references to and remixes of such bands by current dance/rave/electronica producers (e.g. Can). Mixmaster Morris, for example, refers to 'the Godlike genius' of, among others, Can, Kraftwerk, Edgar Froese (of Tangerine Dream), Klaus Schulze and Brian Eno (Irresistible Force 1992). Again, it is not unusual for such artists to support bands such as Hawkwind.
6. With Graham Wood and Ian St Paul, in 1994 Ron Rothfield founded the influential dance organisation and record label TIP. The organisation now continues as Tip World, now managed only by Raja Ram (http://www.tipworld.co.uk/).

7. Fraser Clark's indebtedness to McKenna is clearly evident in his essay 'The Final Word on Drugs' (1997), at the beginning of which he explains to the reader that he is doing little more than expounding McKenna's thought (Clark 1997, 185). See also his online *Book of RavElations* (Clark 2003) in which there are repeated references to McKenna.

8. On Zuvuya, see httt://www.delerium.co.uk/bands/zuvuya/. Founder member Phil Pickering went on to work with Tribal Drift.

9. That said, as Ben Malbon has shown of the clubbing experience, 'Far from being a mindless form of crass hedonism, as some commentators suggest, clubbing is for many both a source of extraordinary pleasure and a vital context for the development of personal and social identities' (Malbon 1999, 5).

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